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General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

128th plenary meeting
Thursday, 13 September 2012, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

Agenda item 34 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

(a) Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/811)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.60)

The President: Members will recall that, under agenda item 34, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/253 A at its 97th plenary meeting, on 16 February, and resolution 66/253 B at its 124th plenary meeting, on 3 August. Members will also recall that the Assembly heard an oral report by the Secretary-General, in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 66/253 A, at its 99th plenary meeting, on 2 March, and considered the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/66/889 at its 126th plenary meeting, on 4 September.

One year ago, we inaugurated the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. At that time, I proposed "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" as the theme for the session. Due to my strong belief in that concept, I expressed my hope that focusing on the issue would enhance debate and deepen cooperation on that important topic, which lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations.

Today I see with great satisfaction that the past year has been extraordinary in terms of the role of mediation. We have hosted a number of meetings here at the United Nations. Conferences and seminars dealing with different aspects of that matter have also been organized outside of New York. All those activities culminated in the informal high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 23 May, which was attended by ministers and other eminent mediators, representing different regions.

Throughout the session, from the general debate in September up to now, our aim has been to identify the challenges we are facing, to find out answers and solutions and come up with some alternative tools and mechanisms. Brilliant ideas and proposals have been put forward by Member States and other actors on how to render mediation more effective.

I am very pleased to see that those ideas have already started to be developed and that concrete deliberations and actions have taken place to materialize the proposals. Today's adoption of a follow-up draft resolution on mediation reflects the interest of the membership to actively pursue that issue. I am grateful to Member States for their continued interest and support, as well as for their active engagement in that crucial matter.

At this stage, let me express my appreciation to Finland and Turkey for their leadership, as the two co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Mediation, and for their support to me on developing that theme during my mandate.

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During all the meetings and other activities, we have also seen once again the important role in mediation of regional organizations and civil society, in addition to that of the United Nations and Member States. Since every situation is unique, we should benefit as much as possible from the comparative advantages of different actors. That requires seamless cooperation among all.

Today is a special day for mediation. First, the Secretary-General will present his report (A/66/811) and the Guidance for Effective Mediation. We will then proceed to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.60, on mediation. I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate, on behalf of all representatives, our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his genuine leadership and personal commitment to the concept of mediation. I would also like to express my satisfaction with the acknowledgement of my role as the President of the General Assembly in his report. His consensus report before us provides an in-depth and comprehensive analysis. I believe that the Guidance, which he put together after extensive consultations with all relevant actors, will be very useful for mediators at different levels.

I would like to share with representatives a vision that I have always believed in. In my view, dialogue among civilizations offers a complementary approach to preventing and peacefully resolving conflicts. Therefore, during the past year, I have placed a special focus on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Today, it is no secret that some disputes are either emanating from cultural or religious differences, misperceptions and misunderstandings, or are exacerbated due to different methodologies and ideologies. The role of the Alliance could be particularly crucial in such situations. I see more room in that sphere for further elaboration. Parallel to that, the Alliance should be strengthened so that it can more effectively fulfil its noble mission. I will continue building useful understanding based on those facts until the last day of my mandate and beyond.

Some past and current crises have shown that if mediation and other peaceful means are used in a timely manner and at an early stage, it is cost-effective. It leads to saving innocent lives and alleviates the suffering of civilians, particularly women and children. It is necessary that we learn from our experiences and employ mediation in a more effective manner, because it is the best way out in a crisis situation, if used as a prevention measure.

On our part, at the General Assembly, we should keep the momentum building on mediation and continue to focus on the challenges before us. It is no secret that during this session we exercised the concept of mediation in particular cases, either here at the General Assembly or through field trips. In that regard, I am particularly pleased that the next President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, proposed "The settlement of disputes by peaceful means" as the theme for the general debate this year.

I sincerely believe that, building on the achievements so far within and outside the United Nations, the energy, vision and commitment of the President-elect will further the concept of the peaceful resolution of conflicts for the common good of humankind and for a more peaceful future for all.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I commend the General Assembly for promoting mediation as a key means to realize the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I am pleased to present to the Assembly my report (A/66/811) on the subject and the Guidance for Effective Mediation.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership and focus on this vital issue. I also thank the Group of Friends of Mediation, co-chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen of Finland and His Excellency Ertuğrul Apakan of Turkey, for their support and leadership.

I share your vision, Sir, and have made strengthening preventive diplomacy and mediation a priority. I wish to see the United Nations and all our partners make full use of the potential of mediation to prevent, manage and resolve disputes and conflicts. We need to have the know-how, the operational dexterity and the partnerships to undertake mediation professionally and effectively.

Many lives are at stake when a conflict reaches a stage that requires the deployment of a mediation team. The United Nations has been active in mediation efforts in dozens of disputes and conflicts. Today, the United Nations is supporting mediation and facilitation efforts in all regions of the world with a broad array of local, national and regional partners. That is a signal that more parties are open to the promise of mediation. Yet with growing engagement comes growing expectation. We

must be up to the task, and I am pleased to report that we are making real progress. With the support of Member States, we have worked hard to enhance our readiness to implement and support mediation processes.

The Department of Political Affairs, which anchors many United Nations mediation efforts, has been strengthened. The Department's Mediation Support Unit has become a key provider of mediation services within and outside the United Nations system. Standby teams of mediation experts have been quickly deployed to all corners of the world, from Central Africa to Central Asia, from Europe to the Middle East and to the Americas. We are also doing more to ensure that United Nations envoys and special representatives have the experience, knowledge and support necessary to provide good offices and mediation. This is the day-to-day work of our political missions in the field. Our country teams on the ground are also frequently called upon to help support national efforts to peacefully resolve tensions.

Our mediation work draws on the experience and capacities of the entire United Nations system, including support from the United Nations Environment Programme for natural resources negotiations, the expertise of UN-Women to promote women's participation, and the work of the United Nations Development Programme to assist national and civil society actors in developing their mediation capacity.

However, mediation is not the exclusive domain of the United Nations. Member States, regional, subregional and non-governmental organizations are increasingly involved. This diversity of actors is an asset. Each can contribute to the search for peace according to its comparative advantage. In some settings, however, the competition among different players has hampered mediation efforts. It is our common responsibility to work together to support the effective use of mediation. That is why we are increasing our engagement with regional organizations, Member States and non-governmental organizations to build mediation capacity, cooperation and networks at the regional, national and local levels.

We must also continue to enhance the participation of women in peace processes. We are now providing gender expertise and appointing women in most United Nations mediation teams, though there is still clearly room for improvement. More and more of our teams are making genuine efforts to consult with women's organizations systematically throughout the mediation process. There are a growing number of female senior officials who undertake mediation as part of their duties in field missions, and, as I state in my report, I remain committed to appointing a female United Nations envoy to lead a United Nations mediation effort.

Overall, we have improved our support for inclusive and effective mediation processes. If we are to sustain those efforts, mediation efforts must be adequately resourced.

The General Assembly has also requested the development of the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation. It is annexed to the report before the Assembly.

In developing the Guidance, we drew extensively from our own experience as well as from the insights of Member States and others. The result is a foundational document for United Nations mediation efforts and for all interested in the peaceful resolution of disputes. I am pleased that the General Assembly is encouraging all mediation actors to make full use of it.

On 27 September, we will hold a special high-level launch of the Guidance. The event will feature a panel discussion with the participation of a number of eminent mediators. I encourage Member States' Ministers to attend this important event.

As I have often said, mediation can succeed only where there is a commitment to solving a conflict through dialogue and real leverage to back it up. Regrettably, some of the tragedies before us make clear once again the terrible price that is paid for the absence of international unity or a lack of political will from the parties.

While not all conflicts may be amenable to mediation, we must remain engaged and constantly look for opportunities for dialogue. Our commitment to resolve disputes and conflicts peacefully is a central tenet of the Charter of the United Nations, and mediation is a key tool.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General.

I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.60.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution" (A/66/L.60), on

behalf of the Group of Friends of Mediation, chaired by the representatives of Finland and Turkey. Over a year ago, we adopted by consensus its first United Nations resolution on mediation (resolution 65/283).

The draft resolution before the Assembly is a follow-up to that landmark resolution. The aim of the draft is to acknowledge the advances that have been made to further consolidate the role and use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution, including through the use of the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation.

In line with the efforts under way to revitalize the General Assembly, the draft resolution does not repeat major sections of the previous resolution. Rather, it emphasizes the advances that have been made, but at the same time reminds us that further work is necessary.

There are three central elements in the draft: first, taking note of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 65/283, including the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation asked for in the same resolution; secondly, promoting the use of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution through a call on the various actors involved in mediation, as well as through the use of the Guidance; and thirdly — last but not least — the biennialization of the handling of the sub-item on the agenda of the General Assembly in order to make possible a substantive, in-depth consideration of the issue.

We are delighted to bring this consensual draft resolution before the General Assembly at this session. As you, Mr. President, have had mediation as one of your priorities, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your valuable efforts and engagement in connection with this issue. We wish also to thank His Excellency the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for their useful work. We also thank all Member States for their constructive and active participation in the negotiations that led to this draft resolution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Mediation, co-chaired by the representatives of Finland and Turkey. The Group currently consists of 32 States Members of the United Nations and several regional organizations and other international organizations.

As highlighted in the introduction of the Secretary-General's report (A/66/811), "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution", the General Assembly, at its sixty-fifth session, took the landmark step of adopting by consensus its first resolution on mediation (resolution 65/283). The aim of the resolution was to consolidate the normative bases, reinforce support to mediation activities and enhance Member States' engagement in mediation efforts. In resolution 65/283, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the progress made on its implementation to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. The Group of Friends of Mediation warmly thanks the Secretary-General for his report, including its annex on United Nations guidance for effective mediation.

We find the Secretary-General's report to be comprehensive and useful. We appreciate the report's detailed account of the implementation of resolution 65/283. The implementation is well under way, and we believe that mediation has gained more political attention. Further strengthening the United Nations mediation capacity and enhancing the mediation efforts of the United Nations is our common goal.

This is of the utmost importance today, especially when we take into account that, after nearly two decades of decline, the number of conflicts is on the rise again, as noted in the report. Proper resourcing of United Nations mediation efforts is also vital in order to solve these new low-intensity conflicts and older ones. As the Secretary-General's report points out, resources for the majority of United Nations mediation activities and good offices work come from voluntary contributions. We call on Member States to continue to provide voluntary contributions to these activities. We also welcome the efforts of the Department of Political Affairs to further broaden its donor base. Given that mediation is a core activity of the United Nations, providing predictable and stable financing needs to be discussed further in the near future.

The Group of Friends of Mediation notes with satisfaction the positive achievements in the field of partnerships and coordination. Enhanced partnerships and better coordination remain key objectives for our future work. Regional and subregional organizations are important players and partners, and provide valuable contributions to mediation. Mediation often means teamwork. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to strengthening the collaboration of the

United Nations with all relevant actors working on mediation issues. We appreciate the holistic approach to mediation, which acknowledges the different actors involved in mediation. Promoting contacts and links between mediation communities and networks is essential in order to improve coordination and cooperation and to address the challenges of the diverse and crowded field of mediation.

The Group of Friends of Mediation highly appreciates the Secretary-General's efforts to increase women's involvement in all stages and levels of peace processes, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). We endorse the four targets set for the United Nations. Progress has been made, but a great deal remains to be done. We encourage efforts to enhance the participation of women in peace processes.

Annexed to the report is a milestone document that deserves much attention, "Guidance for Effective Mediation" (A/66/811, annex I). As the Assembly will recall, resolution 65/283 also requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and other relevant actors, to develop guidance for more effective mediation, taking into account, inter alia, the lessons learned from past and ongoing mediation processes. The Group of Friends of Mediation welcomes the publication of the Guidance with appreciation. We value the efforts of the Secretariat to produce the Guidance through a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent consultation process. We value the opportunities given to Member States, regional organizations and civil society to provide input to the Guidance.

Due to the diversity and complexity of conflicts requiring mediation, there is no one-size-fits-all formula to successful mediation. However, there are certain guiding principles that are common in mediation processes. In this context, the Group of Friends of Mediation appreciates the fact that the Guidance discusses the main issues that every mediator and his or her team should take into consideration. We find that the Guidance is a practical reference document for mediators and those involved in mediation processes.

The Guidance highlights that achieving peace is a series of complex challenges. One of the challenges is the multiplicity of actors involved in mediation processes. As a result, a successful outcome often requires combined efforts. A multi-stakeholder effort can work only if the actors involved work together, with coherence of purpose and some level of coordination. During the past years, there have been many initiatives to improve cooperation and coordination in mediation-related issues, such as the Group of Friends of Mediation. Yet, once again, much more work needs to be done.

The Group of Friends of Mediation is glad to note that the Guidance underlines the importance of inclusiveness, including the participation of women in mediation processes, and of the gender dimension throughout the Guidance. The United Nations plays a central role in standard-setting on the participation of women in peace processes and in best practices in ensuring that the gender perspective is present in all phases of mediation. The Group of Friends of Mediation would like to call on all Member States, regional and subregional organizations and civil society to disseminate and use, as widely as possible, the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation in mediation processes around the world.

The Secretary-General, together with the Group of Friends of Mediation, will launch the United Nations Guidance for effective mediation on Thursday, 27 September. A high-level panel will discuss the Guidance and mediation-related issues in an interactive manner. All Member States and observers, as well as accredited representatives of civil society and the media, are invited to participate, and we will provide further details in the future.

The Group of Friends of Mediation would like to encourage all parties to make better use of the means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, including mediation. The United Nations, having more experience, expertise and resources than any other organization in mediation and the implementation of peace agreements, has a central role to play. In this context, we view the Secretary-General's report and the Guidance for effective mediation as a key document that reflects and aims to improve this role.

I want to conclude by thanking you personally, Sir, for your leadership during this session of the General Assembly in the field of mediation. Your work is highly appreciated.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization

and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The European Union appreciates the strong emphasis given to the topic of mediation during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under your leadership, Mr. President. We are also grateful for the work of the Group of Friends of Mediation under the leadership of its two co-chairs.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for his presentation of his report and the Guidance for Effective Mediation (A/66/811 and annex I). We commend the way the report addresses various aspects of mediation activities and value the Secretary-General's efforts to promote the use of mediation. Based on last year's resolution 65/283, the European Union considers the report and the Guidance to be a positive development that paves the way for further progress.

The persistence of conflicts worldwide fuels the need for strengthened mediation capacities. The value of mediation efforts is more evident in current circumstances. The complexity of many crisis situations contributes to the challenge of mediation and underlines the need for inclusive mediation processes with skilful mediators.

The European Union appreciates the way in which the Guidance was prepared. The inclusive process of consultations enabled relevant actors to contribute to that important endeavour. The outcome is a useful tool for mediators and mediation support teams across the world, which will benefit from its comprehensive approach. By presenting the fundamentals of mediation, the Guidance includes essential elements to be addressed when setting up a mediation process, as well as during the course of mediation efforts. We encourage the wide dissemination of the Guidance, which can serve as a useful reference tool. That will contribute to fulfilling the aim of having a broad range of mediators with the right set of skills and the knowledge of the issues that need to be given due consideration in a mediation process.

Naturally, it is likely that there will be different views regarding some of the points included, as the Guidance in itself is a toolkit, while a particular approach is always defined case by case. Hence, the Guidance does not offer cookie-cutter solutions to a crisis situation. We welcome the importance attached to vital issues, such as the inclusivity of mediation processes; the coherence, coordination and complementarity of the mediation effort; and the quality of a peace agreement. For instance, the recommendation to have a single lead mediator is very helpful.

Regarding international law, we stress the need for mediators to act strictly within the established normative framework. For example, when it comes to inclusivity, we see that contacts between United Nations mediators and actors who have been indicted by the International Criminal Court are to be limited to essential contact only — for example, to what is required in order to save lives. When it comes to judicial processes, we recall previous reports of the Secretary-General that established that mediators should let justice follow its course.

We welcome the continued strong focus on capacity-building for national and local actors. The report provides many positive examples of national and local efforts, and we need to continue to build on those. The strong emphasis given to women's participation is appreciated, and we encourage the further steps that the Secretary-General intends to take in that respect and to which he also referred in his statement today.

Regional, subregional and other international organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, are increasingly involved in mediation activities. The European Union, in its turn, attaches great importance to mediation and continues to develop its own mediation capacities. Considering the growing number of actors involved in mediation, partnerships and coordination have become essential.

Let me conclude by encouraging once more all relevant actors to disseminate and utilize the Guidance for Effective Mediation. We look forward to reviewing further progress on mediation at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes to ensure that in no case are international peace and security and justice endangered, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we reiterate the need for all States, large and small, regardless of the extent of their political or military power, to refrain

in their international relations from threatening or using force against the sovereignty and territorial and political integrity of any State, in contravention of the principles and purposes of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

In accordance with those principles and purposes, the Venezuelan Government appreciates the efforts of the United Nations to improve its mediation capacities for addressing crisis situations that could have negative consequences for international peace and stability. It is essential that conflict prevention efforts be carried out in strict accordance with the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, we have accumulated laudable experience in the use of mediation for conflict resolution. The Rio Group made a major contribution to ending the terrible armed conflicts in Central America in decades past. Recently, the Union of South American Nations has contributed to conflict prevention and solution in some brotherly countries of our continent.

My delegation welcomes the efforts of the experienced Algerian diplomat, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, to reach a peaceful solution to the situation in Syria. It is important to remember that this diplomat led the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide, whose 2008 report asserts that the increasing attacks against personnel and facilities of the United Nations are the product of the end of neutrality and impartiality in the policies of the Organization. That same report states that the image of the United Nations as a humanitarian organization has been undermined and, in its place, the image of a United Nations that subordinates humanitarian activities to the political and military concerns of the great Powers has emerged.

The United Nations should avoid any temptation to promote the indiscriminate, biased and politicized use of coercive measures, including the use of force. In that regard, the United Nations must act neutrally and impartially, and hence in a humanistic way, in order to enhance its capacities as a mediator in cases voluntarily and formally requested by parties to international disputes.

My delegation will join the consensus in adopting draft resolution A/66/L.60, facilitated with great stewardship by the delegations of Turkey and Finland.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): At the outset, I wish to join others in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on the very important issue of strengthening the role of mediation. We thank the Secretary-General for his useful report, pursuant to resolution 65/283, and for the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation (A/66/811 and annex I).

Indonesia has actively participated in both the Group of Friends of Mediation, co-chaired by Turkey and Finland, and in the open-ended consultations that led to last year's resolution 65/283 on mediation, and draft resolution A/66/L.60 before us today, on which we hope befitting action will be taken by all countries. Peace through peaceful means must be approached as the highest priority by the international community with the greatest seriousness, resolve and support.

For its part, Indonesia is not only committed to mediation, but also a passionate advocate of it. We have reaped the benefits of deft, credible and sustained mediation in resolving conflict situations within our borders, and have made use of preventive diplomacy and dialogue to defuse tensions and conflagrations in our region. Indonesia appreciates that the inputs that it has submitted to the Secretariat are reflected in annex II of the Secretary-General's report.

I would like to briefly touch upon the report before us. However, before doing so, allow me say that we highly appreciate the way in which the report was developed, in close consultation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, both in the United Nations system and outside, including regional and subregional organizations and civil society.

The report lays down some very helpful ways to mainstream the use of mediation globally and to reinforce mediation capacity-building at the regional, national and local levels, including through better partnerships, collaboration, coordination and women's participation. Indonesia subscribes to a stakeholder approach, and fully supports the building of strong partnerships, including with regional entities. We also emphasize the need for greater and sustained support on enhancing mediation and peacemaking capacities locally, nationally and regionally, in particular where conflict occurs or is at risk of ensuing.

Indonesia commends the United Nations for being one of the largest practitioners of mediation. The work of the various United Nations envoys, special representatives and political missions has, to

a significant degree, been critical in helping to defuse crises and to broker many negotiated settlements. However, there is clearly a need for the United Nations system to do more and for Member States and parties to conflicts to resolutely commit to finding peace fairly through political processes and dialogue. While we are encouraged by and commend the increased use of United Nations-led or -supported mediation since 2009, we reiterate that credible, properly supported and sustained political processes with national ownership are crucial.

Indonesia underscores the essential role of the General Assembly in supporting mediation. In that regard, we encourage the Assembly to strengthen its engagement with relevant actors, particularly regional and subregional organizations, which have local knowledge and usually have special historical and cultural ties with the parties in conflict, increasing their chances of success at mediation.

With regard to the report's annexed United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation, it, too, contains many useful ideas. However, each conflict is unique, and we note the non-binding nature of that tool. Its use and dissemination by Member States, regional and subregional organizations and other relevant actors must be voluntary. In that respect, we support the reference to that effect in the draft resolution.

We also support the reference in the draft resolution calling for the Secretary-General to brief Member States on his mediation activities on a regular basis. Indeed, it is helpful for the wider States Members of the United Nations to be consistently informed about the good efforts on mediation by the Secretary-General. Such briefings and cross-fertilization will leverage peacemaking efforts, as well as the oversight role of Member States in United Nations mediation activities.

As our final point, our experiences have taught us a very important lesson: mediation works, but it needs to be nurtured and given space to evolve, with the concrete translation into reality of a sincere will by the parties in conflict.

Mr. Kogda (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. My delegation also welcomes the presence of the Secretary-General at this meeting and takes the opportunity to thank him for presenting his report (A/66/811), pursuant to resolution 65/283. We also appreciate his tireless efforts to strengthen the mediation role of the United Nations.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the Ambassadors of Finland and Turkey on behalf of the Group of Friends of Mediation. My delegation wishes to make some observations in its national capacity.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of mediation as a preferred way to prevent and peacefully settle disputes, in particular in Africa, where various kinds of crises and conflicts seriously threaten peace and compromise development efforts.

We welcome the report that has just been presented to us. We believe that the Guidance for Effective Mediation is a useful reference for all actors leading mediation processes (see A/66/811, annex I). We also wish to express our appreciation for the significant views and contributions of Member States, pursuant to paragraph 11 of resolution 65/283, in order to ensure the success of mediation activities.

My delegation wishes to underscore the need to continue and strengthen cooperation and partnerships between the United Nations and subregional and regional organizations in the area of mediation. In that regard, we wish to pay tribute to the work undertaken in that regard by such African regional and subregional organizations as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community.

However, it is important to find the best possible way to forge a strategic relationship between the United Nations and such organizations in order to rationalize the use of resources, utilize local capacities and ensure the success of conflict prevention and settlement activities. The best way to achieve that objective is to strengthen the mediation and conflict prevention capacities of regional organizations, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as to ensure specific and predictable resources for mediation activities.

We encourage the Secretary-General to continue support for the 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union and we welcome the efforts undertaken by United Nations departments, on behalf of the African Union, aimed in particular at strengthening capacities in the field of mediation and conflict resolution.

We are confident that the implementation of the recommendations contained in resolution 65/283 will enable us to strengthen the role of mediation in the prevention and settlement of disputes. For its part, Burkina Faso reiterates its readiness to lend its modest contribution to collective efforts to prevent and settle disputes through its involvement in mediation processes, in particular in Western Africa.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to commend the statements of the Secretary-General and the President concerning mediation and forgiveness. There is no doubt that the approach of mediation, and the attendant values of tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation in settling disputes and conflicts, will lead to the optimum sustainable resolution of conflicts. It is therefore important for the United Nations to value and uphold the concept of tolerance and forgiveness in the context of mediation.

In that regard, the vision of the Security Council must be consistent with that of the General Assembly. It is important that the Security Council avoid approaches that run counter to those of mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Those two principal organs of the United Nations must speak with one voice. While the General Assembly upholds the approach of mediation and resorts to the peaceful settlement of disputes, that approach should not be contradicted by other solutions endorsed by the Security Council that promote the culture of war and escalate tensions in current conflicts.

The delegation of the Sudan, while endorsing the importance of mediation, recalls the successful experience of the fraternal State of South Africa after the heinous era of apartheid. It is important to build on that experience, which relied on forgiveness and tolerance to settle the dispute.

For a long time, my country, the Sudan, has enjoyed success in settling tribal disputes through mediation mechanisms, which are known as "*ajaweed*" and are based on tolerance and forgiveness. They have led to the settlement and resolution of numerous internal conflicts. We therefore call upon the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the Security Council, to continue to uphold the approach of mediation and its attendant forgiveness and tolerance in order to achieve reconciliation in Darfur, instead of resorting to an unfair judicial regime, which is politicized in the context of the International Criminal Court. Modern experience has proved that the Court's intervention complicates conflicts and hinders the approach of mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

My Government, in cooperation with the United Nations and the African Union and under the sponsorship of fraternal Qatar, has achieved great success in strengthening the peace process in Darfur through negotiation and peaceful means, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution" (A/66/811), which is before the Assembly today. In that regard, I appeal to all delegations to support those efforts and no others.

I conclude by emphasizing our support for draft resolution A/66/L.60, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution".

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

In view of the desire of Members to dispose of this item expeditiously, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider draft resolution A/66/L.60. In this connection, since the draft resolution has only been circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I will take it that the Assembly agrees with that proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/66/L.60, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Graisse (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/66/L.60, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.60?

Draft resolution A/66/L.60 was adopted (resolution 66/291).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Díaz Bartolomé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Argentina joined the consensus on the draft resolution entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". In so doing, Argentina reaffirms once again its commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as its conviction that multilateralism is a principle fundamental to international peace and security.

Although all methods for the settlement of disputes are equally valid in terms of resolving international disputes, we wish to stress in particular our conviction that it is only through these methods that we can ensure that the solutions reached are just and lasting ones. That requires the use of mediation, which, as stated in the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation, has its own logic and may or may not coexist with other methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes, such as facilitation, good offices and efforts at dialogue.

In that context, we would underline the specific role that the Charter entrusts to the Secretary-General in the field of good offices and mediation.

Argentina stresses that the Guidance refers to the need for the parties to consent to participating in a specific process involving the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is clear, however, that the higher obligation of all Member States to settle disputes by peaceful means can never itself be subject to the consent of the parties. For that reason, it is not acceptable that the validity of a mandate imposed by the international community on the Secretary-General be made conditional on the consent of the parties to a conflict.

In that framework, the Republic of Argentina once again reiterates that it expects successful results from the good offices mission entrusted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations in successive resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization on the question of the Malvinas Islands. It also reiterates its expectation that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will honour its commitment to the Charter and the Organization and resume negotiations with our country with a view to finding a peaceful solution to that dispute at the earliest possible date.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Benedict (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom would like to exercise its right of reply to the previous statement made by the representative of Argentina.

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The British Government attaches great importance to the principle of self-determination, as set out in Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. That principle underlies our position on the Falkland Islands. There can be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders themselves so wish.

The democratically elected representatives of the Falkland Islands once again expressed their own views

clearly when they visited the United Nations for the 2012 session of the Special Committee on Decolonization. They asked the Committee to recognize that they, like any other people, were entitled to exercise the right of self-determination. They reiterated the historical facts that the Falkland Islands had no indigenous people and that no civilian population had been removed prior to their people settling on the islands over eight generations ago. They confirmed that they are and always have been the only people of the Falkland Islands and that they did not wish for any change in the status of the islands.

Mr. Díaz Bartolomé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Argentina, speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom on the Malvinas Islands, reiterates in all its terms the statement made by the President of Argentina to the Decolonization Committee on 14 June 2012.

The Government of Argentina recalls that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas are an integral part of the national territory of Argentina, and that owing to their illegal occupation by the United Kingdom, they are the object of a sovereignty dispute between both countries that has been recognized by various international organizations.

That illegal occupation by the United Kingdom led the General Assembly to adopt a number of resolutions, including resolutions 2065 (XX), 3160 (XXVIII), 31/49, 37/9, 38/12, 39/6, 40/21, 41/40, 42/19 and 43/25, all of which acknowledge the existence of the sovereignty dispute connected to the question of the Malvinas and urge the Governments of Argentina and of the United Kingdom to resume negotiations in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute. Statements to that effect were made by the Special Committee on Decolonization on 14 June 2012, as well as by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, among other bodies.

Argentina deems it regrettable that the British Government is attempting to distort historical facts with the obvious goal of covering up the act of usurpation committed in 1833, which, since the inception of the British invasion, has been the object of continued, repeated protests by Argentina. That distortion also makes clear the obvious lack of certainty on the part of the United Kingdom with regard to what it considers its rights in connection with the question of the Malvinas.

Argentina would remind the United Kingdom of its commitment, expressed unequivocally by both countries, to undertake efforts aimed at achieving an amicable solution to their sovereignty dispute, as mandated by the General Assembly. Instead of attempting to refute accepted historical facts whose consequences are well known, the United Kingdom should honour that commitment and immediately resume negotiations with our country on the sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas, to arrive at the just and lasting solution to the dispute that the international community is calling for.

Argentina reiterates that the principle of the self-determination of peoples, which is the only element on which the United Kingdom is attempting to base its argument in this case and which is used exclusively in the case of the Malvinas Islands, is clearly totally inappropriate and not applicable to this dispute. In the same vein, Argentina regrets that the United Kingdom continues irresponsibly to generate expectations among the inhabitants of the islands based on the illicit exploitation of Argentinian natural resources, in open violation of international law.

Argentina reaffirms its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas, since they are an integral part of the national territory of Argentina.

Mr. Benedict (United Kingdom): I will be brief. The United Kingdom does not consider that a conflict exists over the Falkland Islands, and I reiterate what I previously stated, that we have no doubts whatsoever about the United Kingdom's sovereignty over those islands.

Mr. Díaz Bartolomé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief. With regard to the statement just made by the representative of the United Kingdom, Argentina fully reiterates the statement made by the President of our nation to the Special Committee on Decolonization on 14 June, and recalls that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas are an integral part of our national territory. Being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, they are the object of a sovereignty dispute between both countries recognized by the General Assembly, which has called for its resolution.

In conclusion, Argentina once again reaffirms its legitimate sovereign rights over the the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas.

The President. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 34 and of agenda item 34 as a whole.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.